

Architectural Design 3.2 and 3.3

Winter/Spring 2019 | Architecture Department | Cal Poly | Instructor: Kent Macdonald

Paradise Redux

Your project for the next two quarters is planning the rebirth of Paradise, the town devastated recently by the Camp Fire. This was the largest wildfire in California's history: 86 lives lost, some still missing, and nearly twenty thousand structures destroyed.

Home before the fire to some 26,000 people, Paradise was virtually erased in a matter of hours. It had been a sprawling, low-density community in the pine forests of the Sierra foothills. There were a few large buildings – a hospital, a high school, and several churches – but, in general, modest houses on large lots and trailer parks composed the bulk of the town. A pair of broad commercial streets had an eclectic mix of retail uses but these were widely spaced, and so nothing felt pedestrian-oriented, intimate, or sociable. The mayor, in talking about rebuilding plans, expressed a desire to change that: "We want a Main Street," she said. Your work will be to re-imagine Paradise as a town with a better sense of place.



PHASE ONE: URBAN DESIGN

But what does that term – “sense of place” – really mean? How do we create that? In order to get at the answers to these questions, we'll spend the earliest part of winter quarter researching town planning principles and precedents. We'll pay particular attention to the **New Urbanism**. This is a planning paradigm that seeks to foster a greater sense of social, architectural, and environmental cohesion and diversity than does **single-use zoning**, the dominant planning paradigm in the US. According to its critics, that paradigm is responsible for urban sprawl and a host of environmental and social ills. In your studies, you'll investigate several projects that have sought to counteract its worst characteristics.

Next, you'll establish your own goals for Paradise. What kinds of institutions are needed? What kinds of housing and commercial services? Part of your work will be to determine the types, sizes, and locations of these new buildings, but a larger question will be how can these be arranged to create the kind of center(s) that the old town lacked? Can we make better connections between Paradise's neighborhoods? Can we create a better fit between the town and its surroundings – and the environment in general? As an example, **Bo01** in Sweden is a large-scale, walkable, mixed-use development that has incorporated sustainable practices into virtually every aspect of its design. The hope is that you can propose something equally forward-looking.



At the same time, what cultural, social, and recreational institutions might you propose to enrich Paradise as a place, transforming it into the kind of town that people would not only want to live in but visit as well? Your task ahead will be to establish the physical organization and cultural improvements that manifest this greater ambition.

PHASE TWO: BUILDING DESIGN

Later in winter quarter, after developing the planning armature for a re-imagined Paradise, we'll move on to designing mixed-use complexes on particular sites. The particular programs are yet to be determined – you will, in fact, have a say in creating them – but, for now, you need to know only that they will include the kinds of civic and cultural institutions that were destroyed by the fire, along with housing and commercial uses.

Assisting you throughout this second phase will be architects from several San Francisco firms. Meeting intermittently with you through both quarters, these “teaching partners” will advise you as you establish goals for your project, investigate precedents, and develop various alternatives for your building's internal organization and external massing. Later, once you've established a definitive parti, you'll begin to flesh out the project, developing it in sync with the requirements of Arch 307 and 342 by incorporating various systems – structural, egress, and environmental – into a cohesive, integrated whole.

We'll end the architecture phase of the work sometime around the eighth week of spring quarter. At that point, in groups, you'll revisit your initial planning decisions, integrating your completed architectural projects more fully into the new town plan and refining it as necessary. Our final presentations will be in the first week of June: in Paradise with town residents and in San Francisco in the architectural offices of your mentors.

Top photo: Burned out car and home in Paradise by Rosa Furneaux/Mother Jones

Bottom photo: View of Bo01, Malmö, Sweden by Gary Austin/Journal of Green Building